

anathematize

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/40801050) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/40801050>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warnings:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence , Major Character Death
Fandom:	Dream SMP
Relationships:	No Romantic Relationship(s) , Wilbur Soot & Technoblade & TommyInnit & Phil Watson
Characters:	Technoblade (Video Blogging RPF) , Phil Watson Philza , Wilbur Soot , TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Clay Dream (Video Blogging RPF)
Additional Tags:	Bad Parent Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Good Parent Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Horror , Cannibalism , Dark Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Platonic Possessive Sleepy Bois Inc , Dark , Possessive Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Murder , Alternate Universe - Supernatural Elements , mentions of parental abuse , but listen it isnt phil , hes a good dad trust me , Wilbur Soot and Technoblade and TommyInnit are Siblings , Blood and Gore , Blood and Violence , Minor Character Death , Deaths , As in plural , Bad Person Clay Dream (Video Blogging RPF) , Religious Guilt
Language:	English
Series:	Part 6 of Something Wicked This Way Comes
Collections:	hixpatch's all time favorites
Stats:	Published: 2022-08-04 Updated: 2023-11-30 Words: 20,838 Chapters: 5/9

anathematize

by [Flustered](#)

Summary

That isn't Phillip. The man who gently treats Tommy like something precious. Or who listens on the couch as Wilbur strums his guitar, clapping with delight once Wilbur hums the last note.

It isn't Phillip who cooks dinner for them. Who insists on taking care of them, after years of neglect. It isn't Phillip who tearfully apologizes for missing so much time with his sons.

Techno knows this isn't his pathetic excuse of a father, because he's missing the scar.

Honestly, Techno is this close to just ripping up the rose bush to make sure Phillip's body is still there.

On hiatus

Notes

Inspired by that haunting reddit post that circulated the internet a few months ago.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

Life is good for six months. Six months of hard work, Techno had to pick up a second job when it came clear that things were getting a bit tight. But it works out in the end, because Tommy has the new shoes he needed ages ago, and Wilbur was able to rent out the text books he needed for his semester at the local community college.

Things were *great* for six months. The birds started to sing again. Techno felt like he could breathe easy for the first time in his eighteen years of life. He could buy all the shitty boxed dyes he wanted (and needed) and nobody would yell at him for wasting his own money. Techno filled the fridge with all the groceries that Wilbur liked to use to make meals, Tommy got his favorite youtubers jacket that hung loose and baggy around his waist.

The shitty hovel that was a three bedroom, two bathroom, white picket suburban home that Techno grew up in his entire life was free and empty. The air was brighter. The sun cast colorful rays through the windows in the morning before Techno had to leave. The air of smoke had been scoured from the walls and carpet. Leaving nothing behind-

The world was *good* for six fucking months.

Then Techno came home from his second job at the gym he works at, and Tommy is sitting out on the porch.

Fear hit Techno like a knife in the stomach. The keys to his shitty second hand car that barely sputtered awake when he turned the ignition fell onto the ground with a clatter.

“He’s back,” Tommy says, blank faced.

And that is all that Techno has to know before throwing himself into the house.

Their father made a mistake. Years and years ago, when their mother was pregnant with Wilbur.

Their mom was dying.

And that is how the world was supposed to go. Their mother was supposed to die, taking Wilbur with her, and their father was supposed to grieve and move on with his shitstain of a life. That is it. That is the fucking story.

But their father made a mistake.

He made a deal to save their mom.

A face that Techno thought he'd never see again was sitting on the couch. The same couch that Technoblade himself had spent over twenty hours scrubbing all of the cigarette smoke and ashes out. Restoring it to a less shittier version that didn't give Tommy asthma when he collapsed on it after a day of school.

Thankfully, there wasn't a shitty cig in his hands when Techno laid his eyes on the man. Otherwise Techno would have wrung his neck that second, despite that Wilbur was sitting curled up on the love seat next to the window. The same seat that Techno had reclaimed as *his*.

It was once their mothers.

"Hello son," Philip McCraft smiled at Technoblade. His watery blue eyes were same. The limp blonde hair. The shitty blazer that had stains still dried onto it. "I was wondering when you'd come home. How are you?"

It was like a rug was tugged out of Techno's feet. He came in here to- to- what? He didn't know. He was going to fix it. Like he always did. Techno was the strong one. The middle child, who took care of Wilbur and Tommy because he *could*.

This man should not be here.

Techno's carefully blank mask cracked. What-?

What the fuck was going on?

"I was just saying to Wilbur," Phillip said, still smiling, "that I'm a changed man, Techno. The past few months have given me a whole new perspective."

"Missing." Wilbur spat out, just as angry as Techno is. No, as Techno *should* be. In any other situation, Technoblade would be right next to Wilbur. Phillip always *fucking left*. For days, weeks, and once a month. But never had it been this long before. "You've been *missing*. The police reported you *dead*."

"I know that I lost track of time," Phillip raised his hands defensively, and Wilbur let out a snarl.

"Six." Wilbur held up his fingers to match the number, "six months, Phillip."

"Phil," the man said quickly, "I prefer Phil-"

"I don't give a *shit*." Wilbur stood up, throwing the pillow he had been curling around onto the ground. "You left us and we thought you were dead. No note. No fucking call. Nothing! You just up and left in the middle of the night, dad. What the hell do you think we are supposed to think, huh? You don't get to waltz in here and just pick things up like nothing happened."

Phillip steps forwards, and- and-

He's *crying*.

Techno had never seen his father cry before. And yet, standing here, speechless and full of nameless emotions he's never felt before-

Phillip was openly weeping. "I'm sorry, Wil." Their father says, shakily and full of emotion. "I'm so, *so* sorry. I want to make it up to you. I swear- I'll be a better father. For you, for Techno, and especially for Tommy. *I promise.*"

"Just like the time you promised you'd quit the drugs? Or when you save up the money for the mortgage bill but you blew it on cigs? Or the time when you said you'd show up to my recital but you got so fucked you had to go to the hospital from overdosing?" Wilbur shot back, "your promises are fucking worthless, *Phillip.*"

Phillip's face crumbled, but he looked determined. "This time it's *different*, Wilbur. I promise- no, I give you my *oath*. I'll be better."

Wilbur whirls around and there are tears streaking down his cheeks. He points a finger angrily at Phillip, "if you even have a *shred* of truth of that, you'd show it with your actions. You can say all you want, but I will never believe your words. Go on. Be a better dad. Heaven knows that out of the three of us, Tommy deserves one. But I fucking *swear*," Wilbur got close, nearly spitting into Phillip's face, "if you break is heart once more time, Phillip, I *will kill you.*"

Wilbur turned, stomping away and brushing past Technoblade's frozen form in the doorway. "Come on, Tech," Wilbur says lowly, wiping at his face with his sleeve.

Dutifully, Technoblade hollowly follows Wilbur up the stairs and into Wilbur's bedroom. Tommy was already sitting on the bed. Looking down at his hands just like he had been doing outside. A carefully blank look in his blue eyes.

"So?" Tommy says, voice flat. "Is he going to stay?"

"Yeah," Wilbur flops onto his bed. The fluffy bedding jumps from the action. Techno had bought that for Wilbur soon after Phillip had-

Techno stiffy sits next to Wilbur, letting his older brother grip his hand tightly. It was the three of them. Always the three of them against the world. Ever since their mother had... gone. And Wilbur was too quiet and Phillip wasn't taking care of Tommy when he was a baby so Technoblade had to step up. Quietly. Calmly. Always the three of them.

"I'd say Techno would have to move out of his old room, but fuck that old man." Wilbur says, spitefully and full of vigor. "He can have the fucking couch."

"Okay," Tommy agrees readily. "He deserves it."

"Six months." Wilbur drags a hand down his still wet face. "Six fucking months."

"What's gonna happen now?" Tommy says, "Wil you can't be my legal guardian anymore if he's back. And- and we might have to get rid of Clementine. Dad's allergic to cats,

remember? And the house, do we still owe money on the house and-”

“Tommy,” Technoblade finally rasps out, “it’s going to be okay. We’ll figure it out. We always do. Wilbur can contest the guardianship, and I think the judge would side with him because Phillip straight up and left for six months-”

“Abandonment!” Wilbur snaps his fingers. “Hell yeah! And since Technoblade and I put the house mortgage under *our* names, we can legally boot the old man out. I think.”

“Yeah.” Techno slowly falls onto the soft bedding. It smells like Wilbur, and it is one of the only few comforts that is soothing the fear that is roiling in his stomach. “Don’t worry, Tommy. He can’t do anything.”

Phillip can.

“We got you, lil bro.” Wilbur reaches over and pulls Tommy down onto them. Creating a dog pile, and Tommy lets out a protesting shriek. “He can’t ruin us anymore.”

He could.

“I think we need a sleep over,” Wilbur proclaims. “Techno, fetch the bedding. Tommy, start crafting. We need a tent, stat. And I’ll be the brave one and get the snacks from downstairs with that mother fucker down there.”

Tommy gives Wilbur a salute, “I’ll always remember you, Wil.”

“Remember I gave my life to get you your cheetos, Tommy.” Wilbur says, just as proudly. And he slides off the bed, giving one last squeeze to Techno’s hand before pulling him up too. “Come on Techno, last one back gives me a foot rub.”

“Yuck!” Tommy squirms, “Techno I’m praying for you.”

“Shut it.” Wilbur says, before leading Techno out of the room and closing his door behind him. There is a soft breath. “You okay?”

Techno has to unclench his teeth relieving his aching jaw from the strain. “Yeah,” he lies. “It’s just... a bit much.”

“I know.” Wilbur pulls Technoblade into a hug. “I’m sorry.”

“I’m sorry too.” Techno says hollowly, staring above Wilbur’s head at nothing.

“I just- it’s so fucked up.” Wilbur says, “we are finally moving on with our lives and *every* single time he has to crash it. Every time. I thought we were finally free of him but...”

“Yeah,” Techno says the words numb in his mouth, “I thought he was gone for good this time. I never thought I’d see his face again.”

Technoblade should know.

After all, he killed Phillip six months ago.

Days passed. The first morning was the roughest. When Technoblade woke up to the smell of bacon and eggs, tired from working seventeen hours the previous day. His phone buzzed again, alerting him that he was almost late to leave. And he pried himself out of the pile of limbs and snoring brothers he had tangled himself into last night.

He checked his phone to calculate the time he had actually slept.

A whopping record of two hours of sleep. Technoblade had closed his eyes five hours previous, but he couldn't pass out. Couldn't slip into the unconscious void that would prevent him from *thinking*.

What if Phillip knew? What if he was going to blackmail Techno into letting him back into their lives? Tommy and Wilbur swore up and down that they were not going to let Phillip take another step into their carefully constructed lives again. And Techno wanted to join them. To open his mouth and to fervently agree. Phillip was a shit dad, who always left, and they didn't *need* him anymore.

Techno ran his tongue over his sharp teeth. And clenched his jaw tighter. Making it ache. But he didn't care.

He dragged himself out of Wilbur's room and into his room. Well, it was Phillip's old room. Months ago, when it came apparent (when the deed had gone unnoticed) that their father wasn't going to return, Wilbur and Techno took a day from their jobs and school and gleefully chucked everything of Phillip's out of the window. Tommy helped paint the room, a color which he delightfully called 'blood god red.' They took all of the extra money they had that month and went to Ikea.

They turned it into a room for *Techno*. Wilbur and Tommy insisted he'd get his own room, after sharing his with Tommy for years.

They reclaimed it. Took it back from the bad memories. And turned it into something new. Something special. Something that was wholly theirs.

As Technoblade stepped in, it didn't feel like his room anymore. All he could see were the imperfections. The hole in the wall they couldn't patch up carefully from when Phillip had drunkenly swung (and missed) at Technoblade. The scuff marks of cigarette burns from countless lit butts that were tossed onto the ground.

For a single second, all Technoblade could smell was smoke. Filling his nose. Burning everything. Choking.

Techno hated that smell so much.

Just as quick as it came, the phantom smell disappeared. Leaving Techno alone in an empty room that was too full of memories. He hadn't been haunted by this in months. And he shivered slightly before collecting himself.

He had to go to work soon. And he shuffled over to the rows of thick long sleeved clothes that he kept in his closet. Thankfully his work uniforms could cover anything that might expose him as... something else.

It was getting harder to find ways to cover himself up. He pulled on a clean outfit before shuffling over to the bathroom to lean on the sink when a wave of fatigue washed over him. Technoblade gave himself only thirty seconds before moving. Thirty seconds to gather himself and to pull up his mask.

When he opened his burning eyes, damn it he had slept in his contacts, he had to repress another wave of exhaustion when he noticed the brown hair color was fading. A telltale sign that he should redye his hair soon. It was beginning to look a bit patchy.

Techno had to brush it to the side to do it later. Possibly tonight or tomorrow. Else the color underneath the brown would begin to poke through.

Splashing himself with icy cold water, Techno got ready the rest of the way before gathering himself and trudging down the steps. The smell of bacon grew stronger. And Technoblade eyed the dull glowing clock color that told him it was nearly 5 in the morning.

The figure in the kitchen made Techno's heart lurch in a dizzying wave of fear. Phillip was almost in exact spot that Techno had-

Technoblade swallowed on nothing but air. And Phillip turned around, an apron tied around his waist. "Good morning!" Phillip beamed at him brightly, "I didn't expect you to be up this early. Can I get you anything?"

The world began to tunnel. The edges around Techno's vision was getting darker. And almost hysterically he wondered if this was the moment that Phillip would drop the ask and start *demanding*.

Seventeen years beneath the thumb of the most pathetic man to ever stand on the earth, and Techno was still helpless like he was five years old when Phillip wanted to '*get rid of the fucking beast.*'

Techno swallowed rapidly, before grunting out, "leave." Phillip still standing there. Still looking at him with expectation. Still in the dirty and ragged nasty clothes that he always wore. His sense of style was always the same.

Honestly, Technoblade was mildly surprised that there wasn't a lit cig dangling from Phillip's fingers. He was having a panic attack, and all he could think about was the lack of a cigarette. Like knives sinking into his empty stomach, Techno could only clench his fists and hope that Phillip doesn't see the tremors in his hands.

It was only a sign of weakness. And Technoblade couldn't show it. Not unless he wanted Phillip breathing down his neck, demanding. Always, always, always, demanding things.

"I won't." Phillip says quietly, in an odd way that Technoblade couldn't recall hearing from him before. "I'm keeping my promise, Techno. I'm going to prove it. To all of you. That I'll be *better*."

Techno can't say anything to that.

When will the shoe drop? When will Phillip turn around and casually say, "remember when you killed me? I'm back and I'm going to ruin you too."

But it didn't happen. Instead, Phillip pulls out a plate and began to stack food onto it. Food that Techno had once enjoyed, when he was a kid. Before it was ruined to him. "Here, why don't you eat something?" Phillip offers the plate to him with a smile.

Finally Techno's voice returned, "can't. I'm going to be late." And that was the only sign for him to move. He really was going to be late. Not that his boss cared. But Technoblade took it as his saving grace, and he turned tail and sped out of the room. Nearly forgetting his keys that sat in a bowl next to the doorway.

He could barely recall getting into his shitty car and driving away. Fear gripping at him until he pulled into the parking lot of the local grocery store. His hands shook. And his breath came out in frantic waves.

Fuck.

Fuck.

He hits the steering wheel and immediately regrets it when there was a new dent in the metal. Techno swears under his breath, letting the impervious mask fall away as he studies the new damage he inflicted on the car.

Damn it all. *Damn it all.* He was still falling apart. Still so *weak*.

He just- he has to- fuck-

Techno just needs to get himself together. He has a shift to do. He can't think anymore about this, he needs to get money to pay for things. He gives himself thirty seconds. Insufferably long, yet all too short. And he releases a short breath before unlocking the car and heading into the grocery store.

He can deal with this later.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Cant believe you mort, smh.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Phillip McCraft made a horrible, terrible mistake.

He cannot deal with this later.

Techno stocks the shelves with produce and other merchandise, and his thoughts kept fleeing. Always circling around the scum of a man who was his father. More than once, Techno had caught himself about to break something. A can of beans had been a bit too late, and the metal twisted under his hand and burst open. Spraying downwards, and soaking the tiled floor of the grocery store.

Thankfully, Techno had stepped out of the way in time so he didn't get beans all over his pants. But he still had to stop everything and find a mop to clean it all. His boss laughed when he sheepishly told her, but it wasn't like she could believe that Techno had purposefully crushed the can. His strength was... unnatural.

Like most of him was.

Still, it had put himself into a worse mood than before. And shortly afterwards, Techno's head began to pound from the lack of sleep.

Well, he did his job. The shelves were stacked with new things for customers to purchase. And Techno wanted to collapse after his shift was done. But instead, he gave himself a few minutes of rest in his car before heading over to his second job.

The gym was easier. He just sat behind a desk, checked people in, and then after people left he closed the doors and cleaned everything. Technoblade was very, very good at cleaning. It's probably what led his second boss to leave him alone during his shift, usually leaving just as Technoblade got there.

Nobody came in during the late evening shift. And by the time the sun had sunken far into horizon the gym was empty. Still, Techno swept up the floors and wiped down the machines. Determined to keep himself busy and his mind distracted. Usually he liked to sit and read for a few minutes. Getting a little time to himself before having to complete his job. But today-

Today that simply wasn't an option.

He finished in record time, just as the gym closed. And Techno was suddenly left with nothing to do. And his hands trembled once more. He felt like actual shit. His stomach twisting itself, nothing in it to appease the hunger that demanded food. Technoblade hadn't been able to eat (fucking six months since-) all day and he sat down in the chair and let himself just-

Rest.

Oh fuck what is Techno going to *do* ? He hunches over, placing his head between his legs. It helped when the panic was beginning to bubble up again. He runs his calloused and worn hands through his shitty hair.

He didn't regret it until now. God, when he came back to himself with the blood all over him and a indescribable taste in his mouth, he only felt *relief*. Technoblade hadn't even felt lost as he coldly calculated what to do with Phillip's body. Instead, he sat on the floor in the empty house and laughed, pressing his sharp fingers up against his bloodied mouth. He traced the smile on his lips, and he couldn't stop himself from giggling over the body of his once-father.

But now Phillip was back.

Did he know? Did he remember? He didn't *act* like he was holding Technoblade's noose in one hand. But then again Phillip was never one to act coy. He was blunt like a weapon. If he wanted to hold something over Techno's head again, he would've hinted at it already. But then again, Techno had fled the house like hell hounds were after him.

Only time would tell.

The clock which was always so slow suddenly sped up. And Techno found his second shift over, and locked the doors behind him before walking to his beat up car.

The heavy sensation of being watched caught Technoblade off guard. And he turned sharply, looking behind him. His eyes piercing the darkness behind him, but he found nothing in the shadows. The windows were empty. And there was nothing out of place.

But the hairs on the back of his neck rose. And a niggling sensation told him that Technoblade wasn't *alone*.

“Hello?” Technoblade called out. Holding his car keys in his hand, shifting so the sharpest one was in his fist. Ready to stab at any sign of trouble. “Anybody there?”

And just like that- the watchful gaze left. The weight of it was gone. But Techno didn't trust it. A deep, instinctive part of him, said that whoever it was was still watching. And he didn't push it any further. Instead, he unlocked his car and slipped inside. And with a flick, he clicked the locks back on.

Somehow, he didn't think that they would protect him if it came down to it.

Well, Techno didn't know if people could actually hurt him. He had been hit by a car once and, well. He had barely a scrape on his knee afterwards. But he didn't want to test his luck.

The car drive was short back to the house. The windows upstairs in Wilbur's room were on. It wasn't unusual. And Techno parked and pulled the parking break because he did *not* trust this shitty car's breaks. It lurched on the slight incline on the driveway, and Techno gave himself thirty seconds to gather himself.

Wilbur and Tommy had to deal with Phillip all day while he was gone. And now it was time to shield them with whatever shitty things he's done while Techno was out. It was both a curse and a blessing. Technoblade could successfully avoid Phillip for the rest of his life, but that also left Tommy and Wilbur vulnerable. He wasn't there to protect them.

A new dent appeared on the steering wheel as Techno thought of Tommy getting hurt because he wasn't there to take it instead. The crinkle of metal and plastic made Techno unclench his hands, letting out a low breath before composing himself.

They needed the money. And Wilbur was in the middle of a semester. They simply couldn't afford Techno leaving one of his jobs. In a month when Wilbur was on break, maybe he could get a part time job to give them an extra bit of cash. But for now, it rested on Technoblade.

He didn't mind. It was good to keep busy.

His thirty seconds were up. And Technoblade had to face the music. It was like a bandaid. It was better to rip it off. If Phillip wanted to blackmail him, then it would be better knowing it now rather than dwelling on the what ifs.

The living room lights were on as Techno dragged himself through the door. The bright lights made his head pound, and he blinked quietly.

“You’re home!” The ugly mug of Phillip popped around the corner, and Techno was suddenly hit with the *smell*. “I was wondering when you’d come back, mate!”

The words threw Technoblade off. Mate? What the fuck, Phillip had never once called anybody *ever* ‘mate.’ Combined with the faint smells of pasta, along with the heavier smell of freshly baked sugar and chocolate was absolutely baffling.

“Come in, come in.” Phillip waved Technoblade forwards, “I have some left overs I packed up for you. I don’t know your schedule very well, but I wanted to save you some food. Wilbur and Tommy seemed to like it.” He seemed almost a bit nervous, and Techno’s eyes were burning into him. “I made some cookies for dessert, if you’d like to start with that first.” His eyes almost seemed to twinkle at that, “I know you should probably eat dinner first, but I don’t-”

“Shut up,” Technoblade couldn’t stand hearing another word coming from the man. Whatever kind of shitty trick this was, Technoblade wasn’t going to fall for it. “Why don’t you fuck off and-” go back to the shallow grave Techno put his remains in, “-leave us alone.”

“Okay,” Phillip quietly agreed, “but why don’t I get your food-”

“I’m not hungry.” Techno brushed past him and stomped up the stairs. And he noticed, with utter disgust, that the house was *clean*. Techno did the chores on his off days. Tommy and

Wilbur wouldn't have vacuumed to save their lives.

His skin crawled with the knowledge that Phillip had spread his influence again. He heard a few chords coming from Wilbur's room. But he was too exhausted to check up on his brother. Instead, Techno fell onto his bed. Angry. Confused. But mostly angry.

He thought he had succeeded. Just *for once* in his life, Technoblade was happy he had gotten rid of the worst scum on the planet. And he had failed. Techno punched at one of his pillows. And it made a sad sound as the threads threatened to rip from the force.

He hated him. Technoblade hated Phillip with so much of his heart, he was surprised he didn't fucking kill him *again*. But this time, Wilbur and Tommy were in the house. He couldn't. Not when they could see him act like the monster he was.

The second Phillip tried anything, Technoblade was going to get rid of him. Again. And this time, he wouldn't bury the body under the roses.

This time, he'd fucking *burn* it.

Chapter End Notes

Short chapter, mostly because i wanted to throw something out and the next scene requires a lot of editing. So i broke it in half.

I probably wont post on Friday, so see yall in a week.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

tw: my boy techno does not practice self care. Graphic description of vomiting and mentions of loss of limbs. My boy has Issues with Food. Oops and cannibalism. :) There is cannibalism. Is it cannibalism when they are not the same species? Also parental abuse. Lots of it. But its not from Phil. It's from Phillip.

Completely unbeta'd and I barely glanced thru it for any typos.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Techno woke up with a dry mouth and an itchy throat. He bites back a cough, holding his breath as he turns over on the mattress. The springs creak and crack, probably not in the way that a mattress ought to- but Wilbur had found it on a street corner. How could they give up a perfectly good dumpster mattress? There wasn't any bugs in it. Techno had tested and made sure before bringing it into their already, at the time, infested home.

Techno's hand hit his side table. Bumping into the odd knicknack that Tommy left in his room as his hand hit a glass. The cup was cool in his hand, but disappointingly light. Shit. Techno had forgotten to refill it.

Not that it would do anything. It had been habit to fill a glass when getting ready for bed. He was used to waking up in the middle of the night, throat dry and lungs burning. It had been six months since water had actually felt refreshing to him.

Now it was like choking down mud.

The glowing red clock told him he still had four hours to get up. That was practically a bounty of sleep. And Techno was exhausted. Resolving to get up, grab a drink, and go back to bed.

The clock clicked to the next minute, 3:07 blinking lazily at him. Mocking him for missing another precious minute.

Techno blearily stumbled out of bed. His limbs heavy as he opened his door and shuffled down the hallway. The cool air hit him, but it was nothing when his feet hit the freezing cold stairs. He didn't have socks on, and he hissed at the sudden shock.

Techno paused as his eyes blinked open and he saw muted flashing colors in a bluish hue. It illuminated the entire living room. Colors flashing across the dark space. The dark shadows looked ominous and darker than normal, had Techno not been able to see right through him.

There was a soft noise of a crowd laughing, clapping, chattering in the background in meaningless words, and Techno finally saw the dark figure sitting perfectly still on the couch.

In the flickering light of the dim room, Techno saw something *else* there. His brain barely caught it. The flash of something big, stretching across the room, like inky black tendrils. The light took on a sickening greenish hue.

He froze. A fear like he had never felt before hit him. So sudden that Techno couldn't even brace himself. It was like ice hit Techno's bones. Digging in deeper. Worming its way into a part that Techno didn't know that existed. A hidden, vulnerable, raw ache that had never been touched before. And now began to weep.

Unimaginable terror locked Techno's limbs.

The shadow on the couch twitched. Techno blinked. And the world was normal. There wasn't a monster in the living room, only a man sitting on the sofa. The blue light from the tv casting the world in a cool light.

Then Phillip turned his head towards Techno, blue eyes lighting up in the soft glow of the television. "Hey mate," Phillip's voice was only a touch louder than the show. "What are you doing up so late?"

Now, suddenly wide awake, Techno realized his hand was digging holes into his shirt. Clutching at his heart. He could feel the fabric tearing in his hands. And he let go with a jerk.

"What are you doing up?" Techno retorted, his voice dry and cracking. His back still pressed against the wall, his nerves screaming at him that he was in *danger*.

Phil slowly blinked. His dirty blonde hair falling into his eyes. A smile touched at the edge of his mouth, "I couldn't sleep. It's okay. Can I get you anything?" Phil stood up.

That small part of Techno wailed and screamed at him to *move away he's dangerous!!* And Techno couldn't hide the hitching of his breath, the way his legs tumbled down the stairs like a newborn fawn, barely able to keep his weight. "I'm-"

Phil took a step and Techno flinched back.

God, it had been years since Techno had been this scared of Phillip. Perhaps when Techno hit his first growth spurt, and suddenly he found himself bigger, stronger, *angrier*-

Phil's head tilted to the side. The television flashed, the colors blinking and changing in a snap. Green, blue, *red*-

Blood.

Techno's mouth suddenly began to salivate. Unconsciously, Techno recalled the sharp tart taste of flesh. His teeth breaking apart bone and tearing into the muscle that melted in his mouth-

Techno clasped a hand over his face. And the announcer on the television proclaimed, "Mister Kevin has chosen "code names" for eight hundred!" The bell rang again. The panels flipped over on the screen, revealing a question. The game show continued in the background.

"Mate, you feeling alright?"

"Fuck off," Techno snapped, straightening up from where he hunched against the wall. His shirt was damp from the sudden sweat. His skin felt tight. His eyes burning. He was fucking *scared* for no reason. It was like he was four again, afraid of the dark, curling up next to Wilbur as their father broke glass in the next room.

He's bigger. Stronger. Older. Techno knows he is *powerful* and yet he wanted nothing more than to crawl into Wilbur's bed and have his older brother tell him everything was alright. He turned on his heel, his neck prickling and burning for only a second until he disappeared into the kitchen. Out of sight of Phillip.

God he hated him.

Techno leaned up against the sink, feeling the cold metal on his sweaty palms. Clinging to the sensation. Finally letting out several heaving breaths that just wanted to claw themselves out in frantic waves. He didn't let himself hyperventilate. Instead he grabbed a glass, slamming the cupboard door loudly, and filled it up.

His blood boiled when he saw his hand shaking so badly he could barely hold the cup. He resisted the urge to crush the glass. Instead, knocking back the water like it was alcohol. Draining the glass dry, and feeling his thirst tighten in his throat.

Techno wanted more. He wanted-

He filled the glass up and down it again. Water spilling over his lips and dribbling down his chin to sink into the soft cotton shirt. He wiped his mouth, feeling sick but the water was an unfamiliar weight in his stomach. It eased the emptiness. For a minute.

He left the glass next to the sink, uncaring that it now had spiderwebbed cracks in it. It was old and shitty anyways. Techno's eyes caught on Phillip as he beelined for the stairs. The old man watching him-

An unexplainable urge hit Techno. He wanted to hiss and bare his teeth and get this fucking *freeloader* out of his home. His hands itched to sink his claws into skin, to flex the sharp nails and rip and pull out Phillip's intestines, inch by itch, until he tore out the blood soaked organs and bit-

Techno sneered instead. Turning away from Phillip dismissively. Jumping up the stairs two at a time until he was in his room again.

The clock ticked past 3:23 and Techno landed on the dumpster mattress, somehow knowing that he wouldn't get another wink of sleep tonight.

Techno would never be glad for working such long hours. But it meant he never had to spend more time around Phillip. He could avoid the man. It was odd. Phillip never pushed. And Technoblade never gave him any chance.

The longer he could keep away from Phillip, the better.

He was a coward. A complete chicken. A sad excuse of a brother. But the second Tommy or Wilbur even hinted at Phillip threatening them, Technoblade wouldn't hesitate taking him out again. It had been easy the first time. It wouldn't be different a second time. Or, if Phillip continues to come back from the grave, a third time.

Technoblade would kill him over and over again. Just to get some *peace*.

The sun burned high in the sky. Technoblade's car was boiling, and sweat dripped down his neck. The white crisp shirt that he wore during his shift at the grocery store clung to his back. And Techno winced as it also tried to stick to the seat in the car as he tried to get out of it.

Today was a special day. Tommy's baseball game. And Techno had meticulously planned with both of his jobs an hour gap that he could go sit in the metal benches and watch him play with the rest of his team. He couldn't take off the whole day. Not without consequences. But he pried each job to let him come in a half an hour late, leaving him with a small space where he could come and support Tommy.

He had missed the beginning of the game. It was halfway through the first half. And it looked like Tommy's team was winning. Technoblade sat on the looming metal benches that attracted hornets to create their nests in the crooks of it. The metal burned, hot from sitting under the hot rays of the sun. But Technoblade didn't care. He leaned his forearms onto his knees, watching as the boys out in the field played the game.

Tommy was so bright. Techno spotted him with a red helmet on. A bat in his hands, taking cautious swings of it. Warming up for when he would be at the plate. His uniform was big on him, while most of the other boys it fit them perfectly fine. The shirt was baggy, and the striped material covered up what Techno had done his best to save.

A boy said something, and Tommy tilted his head back and laughed. And it was only because Techno was looking that he caught the glint of sharp canines. Tommy was horribly lucky in some aspects. He and Wilbur barely showed any signs of their... father's mistake. But Technoblade couldn't open his mouth without worry that somebody would notice the sharp teeth.

It was fine.

Technoblade had come to terms with his lot in life. And things would be okay. He has survived long enough. And Tommy deserved the world.

Tommy's eyes flicked over the crowd and landed on Technoblade. He beamed, and Techno's shoulders loosened from the action. Techno gave him a smile in return, giving him a hesitating wave. Techno tried to come to most of his games. Wilbur did so too, but he had a test today and couldn't come.

It was moments like these that made the stress worthwhile. All of the effort Technoblade put in was worth it. Every bit of sweat was shed was paid out in golden moments like this. And he wouldn't have it any other way.

Then Tommy tilted his bat to the side. Pointing the metal instrument to the side, and giving Technoblade a baffled shrug with a grimace. Techno followed the direction, and sitting two benches over was-

Phillip.

Techno's gaze shot back to Tommy's, and a silent question was raised. What the fuck was he doing here?

Phillip *hated* baseball. He never liked sports. And he tried to force Tommy to quit the team several times. Why the hell was he here?

The look between the two broke when it was time for Tommy to step up to bat. He strutted forward, holding the bat easily in a hand as he lined himself next to the plate. Holding the tool in his hands, carefully eyeing up the pitcher.

The ball was thrown. And it landed in the umpires glove, as Tommy swung and missed. The opposing player hollered, "strike!"

Another throw. Techno opted to ignore the large unwanted guest that sat two hundred yards from him. He was here for Tommy. Phillip can go drive off a cliff. In fact, that would be preferable.

"Strike two!" The umpire bellowed, as Tommy failed his second hit. Technoblade leaned forward.

The pitcher held up the final ball. And threw it. Tommy reacted quickly. Swinging the bat, and with a deafening crack, send the ball far out into the field. Tommy dropped the bat and ran to the first base. Techno couldn't stop the proud grin stretching across his face as Tommy continued to second base.

He rose to his feet as Tommy bypassed the second, and went for third. The crowd screamed, and the ball was being thrown back. Being passed between each of the opposing team members as Tommy rounded third base and bolted towards the home plate.

The other team didn't have a hope, as Tommy slid forwards and crashed onto the plate. His team went nuts. Screaming and yelling, racing up to Tommy to slap him on the shoulder. He was surrounded by other boys, and Techno couldn't help but feel the glee and excitement from watching Tommy hit a home run.

Wilbur would get so pissy he missed this. Techno pulled out his phone and sent Wilbur a 'haha loser' message. It served him right for missing out.

That set the mood for the rest of the game. The boys played happily. Techno watched, but he kept glancing down at the time blinking on his phone. He should probably head out soon, as

much as he wanted to wait for the end of the game, he needed to go into his next shift.

The next time he caught Tommy's eyes, he tilted his head and jerked a thumb at the parking lot. Tommy nodded and held up a finger. Thankfully, not the middle one. Techno stood up, stretching for a second, before making his way off the metal bench. And after a few seconds, sweaty and a bit red in the face, Tommy appeared.

"Techno!" Tommy threw himself onto Technoblade, and unfortunately Techno caught a whiff of his sweat.

"Ugh," Techno's face screwed up with disgust. "You're damp."

"No shit!" Tommy beamed at him, his blue eyes bright and without worry. And a small part of Techno's chest eased at the sight. "You try sitting out in the sun for your next turn to bat."

"You're the sports one, not me." Techno shrugged, "anyways, I need to head out. You did amazing today, Tommy."

Tommy crowed, "I know! Actually, here." He stuck his hand into the dirty red-stained pant leg- the one that had slid across the ground as he hit the home plate- and pulled out a crumpled wad of bills.

Techno's breath caught as Tommy handed the money to him. "Tommy," he said, aghast, "where on earth did you get this money from?" His thoughts were already spinning from Tommy stealing. Oh god what if he was caught? Tommy in jail- the police finding out what they *were*-

"Chill out," Tommy rolled his eyes, "it's from Phil."

There was a beat. "Phil-?"

"Phillip our shit dad?" Tommy scoffed, "you know, the 'a fancy lawyer hit him with a car and he spent four months in the hospital and when he woke up he had like, a million dollars.' You know, *that* Phil."

"He what?"

"He didn't tell you?" Tommy snarked, "it was all he could stutter out between tears as Wilbur tore him apart. Doctors say that he wouldn't wake up but by some," Tommy raised up his middle and pointer finger and moved them up and down, "'miracle' he woke up and vowed to be a better dad."

What the fuck? What the *fuck*. Phillip wasn't hit by a car. He had been dismembered and buried in the dirt, every trace of him left expertly cleaned up. The sound as Techno used one of the kitchen cleavers to cut through the bone still echoed in his ears. The harsh *thunk* as it sank through flesh and against the tiled floor. What kind of shit was this?

The money was burning in Techno's hands, and he tried to shove it back but Tommy skipped back. "Too late," Tommy sang, annoyingly, "you touched it, you take it. Think of the cooties, bitch."

“I can’t take this-” Techno said, “you use it. He gave it to you.”

“He has given me like, twenty bucks a day for school lunch.” Tommy shook his head, “listen, I get a hundred dollars a week. I can give a few to you. I want you to buy yourself something to eat.” His voice got a touch softer, “Wil is worried you’re not eating enough and I have to agree, got it bitch? You can spend all your time worrying about us, but we do the same to you. We’re in this together.”

“I don’t-” Techno wanted to protest, but there was a soft, scared look on Tommy’s face. And he reluctantly put the money in his own pocket. It began to burn. He sighed heavily, “okay. I’ll pick up some food.”

“I’m surprised you haven’t been taking the extras Phil has been making,” Tommy said, “the guy actually learned how to *cook*. Wil and I hate it but it is so fucking tasty. He always sets out a portion for you.”

Technoblade has seen the stacked up tupperwares in the fridge. And he shrugged, “thought they tasted like shit, actually.” A lie easily rolling off his tongue. And Tommy laughed, wagging his finger at Technoblade, as if he made a joke.

“That’s what we tell him too! Phil says he’ll make a better dish next time-”

“Why are you calling him Phil?” Techno asked, because growing up it was always ‘*Phillip*. *Don’t ever catch me hearing you call me something else, demon. It’s fucking Phillip.*’

“He says he’s a new person. And he wants to separate himself from who he was before. So.” Tommy shrugged, “Phil. Besides, I think it’s easier to say.”

“Is he...” Technoblade hesitated. “Okay with you?”

Tommy paused, and his voice got soft. “He hasn’t yelled. Not once. And he listens when I talk, you know? One time I tried to see how long he’d last and he let me talk his ear off for three hours. And he hasn’t said a word about the *things*. Hasn’t even called me a monster...yet. Or talked about wanting to get rid of the abominations I have.”

“Tommy,” Techno frowned, “it is not an abomination. It’s a part of you-”

“Shut up.” Tommy snapped, giving Technoblade a hot look, “it’s funny to see you try and claim that when all you do is try and hide everything that makes you the same way. The contacts, the long shirts, the fucking hair dye. You want to pretend to be normal just as much as me. Admit it, you hate those shitty parts of you. Just like I do.”

Hurt flashed across Techno’s face. And Tommy sighed, “sorry.” He didn’t look apologetic at all, “I need to go back. Go get yourself something, actually spend some money for once, Techno. I’m serious. I want to hear what you ate tonight. Got it, bitch?”

Techno pressed his lips together and nodded, and Tommy punched his shoulder once. “Love you.”

“Love you to, Tommy.”

And then he was gone, leaving Technoblade behind in the hot sun. The sweat still clung to his skin, and Technoblade gave himself a few seconds to breathe before moving back to his furnace of a car.

Of course, he forgot to roll the windows down. It was hotter than hell in there.

At least, what that's Technoblade imagined what hell felt like. He might just fit right in down there.

Once upon a time, a man wanted to save his wife's life. He went to every doctor, but each told them the same story. It was only a matter of time. Her lifespan was only a drop in the ocean of time. And her heart was failing every single day.

He tried charlatans, religion, anything he could grab with both hands and *hope*. For his wife was dying, and the wait list for a heart transplant was simply too long.

Until he met the devil in a bar.

"Help me," says the poor man, slumping over the counter, a glass of beer in his hands. "I cannot achieve my hopes, for they are dashed against the rocks. Try as I might, I cannot save my wife and unborn child."

"Ah," said the devil with a wicked grin, "I might have what you need."

There was a soft knock on Techno's door before it swung open. It was a rare evening that Techno's second job had him come in early that morning, leaving him at home to relax. As much as he could.

His cracked phones screen was opened to a familiar sight. His bank account. He opened it nearly daily, checking on the contents. Always calculating the same math. Taking away pieces of it until there was only a little left.

Technoblade would rather choke on his own blood than admit that Phillip's return, and the filling of the fridge of constant groceries, had impacted his finances for the better. But it had taken a load off. Not knowing if they had enough money to take care of groceries.

The numbers were steady inching up higher. Paycheck by paycheck. Barely keeping their heads above. All it would take to empty them out was one misfortune. Techno's car not starting, or if one of his brothers got hurt, it would set them back significantly. But that was the reason why Techno kept a savings account in the first place. Things happened. And it was better to have the money in an emergency.

Techno let his phone drop onto his chest as Wilbur stood in the doorway. A tired, but happy expression on his face. "Hey dipshit, dinner's on the table. Come eat."

Techno's stomach twisted at the thought of food. It was *empty*. An void that craved to have something fill it. But every time he did, thinking that he foolishly *could*, he got violently sick.

Techno's expression flickered, and finally he said, "I'm not hungry. Sorry, but thanks."

Wilbur's face fell. "I made your favorite." He offered up, "it's lasagna. With garlic bread. Extra toasted. Just the way you like it."

When was the last time Techno sat at the table with his brothers over a meal. Admittedly, one he couldn't eat. But suddenly he missed it. The three of them laughing over the food. Techno hadn't been home this early in a... *long* time.

Techno blew out a sigh, tossing his phone onto his pillow. "Sure. I'll have a bite." And he got out of bed.

Wilbur's face lit up. The shadows from under his eyes almost disappearing completely. "Really?"

"I'd said I'd come." Techno huffed out, but a smile tugged on the corners of his lips. Carefully not drawing them back fully to expose the sharper than normal teeth. His legs ached as he got up but he was used to it. Following Wilbur down to the table.

Techno paused when he saw four plates set up. His small smile vanishing.

"Don't worry. He's out right now." Wilbur said, pushing at Techno's shoulder. "I made dinner early." And he winked conspiringly. Then he peered into the living room and barked out, "brat, come get food."

"I'm coming, I'm coming." Tommy groaned from the other room and shuffled in, "what got a stick up your- Techno! I didn't know you were home." And he shuffled over and gave Techno a hug.

"I can just leave-" Techno replied, and Tommy glared up at him.

"Don't you fucking dare," he hissed.

"Dinner is getting cold, hooligans." Wilbur brought a pan out from the kitchen, setting on a towel on the table. "Sit and fucking eat."

Tommy broke free from the hug and slid into his chair. Grabbing a slice of bread and biting into it, not caring that it was fresh from the oven. High temperatures didn't bother them much. Techno gingerly sat down. A wave of nostalgia came over him. It had been... a really long time since he sat down here.

Wilbur picked up his plate and served him a large slice of lasagna, and Techno's stomach churned at the thought of putting in his mouth. "Dig in!" Wilbur smiled, and Techno gingerly picked up a fork.

He didn't want to eat. A touch of nausea hitting him as he looked down at the hot cheese sliding to the side from the noodles. The red sauce steaming on his plate. "I'll wait for it to cool down for a second," Techno replied after a minute, and Wilbur nodded.

Tommy grabbed another slice of garlic bread, and Wilbur batted his hand to the side. “Leave some for the rest of us, black hole.”

“But I’m hungry,” Tommy whined, his mouth open and bits of chewed bread and noodles exposed. The two older brothers winced at the disgusting sight, and Tommy cackled immaturely.

“You can have my slice,” Techno offered up, “I’m not really that hungry.”

“Techno- *ugh*, Tommy!” Wilbur was about to protest when Tommy snatched up the offered bit of bread and shoved it into his mouth whole. “Chew your goddamned food first.”

Tommy opened his mouth to retort, but then suddenly choked. Clutching at his chest as he swallowed and croaked. Grasping at the glass of water near his plate. Wilbur howled with laughter, slapping a hand down on the kitchen table. Techno beaming quietly, but enjoying the chaos.

He had missed this. Even as Tommy gasped and leaned over to snatch Wilbur’s cup, and Wilbur lunged forwards to save his own drink with a shout, Techno couldn’t help but be incredibly happy.

It made everything he did worth it. Every long shift, every annoying customer, every cent he watched go out of his bank account when he worked twice as hard just to earn it-

It was worth it.

After a long while, filled with shouts and jokes, Wilbur turned to Techno with a breathless laugh on his lips. And it vanished. “Why haven’t you eaten?” He asked, and the mood suddenly froze. Waiting on baited breath to see what Techno would do.

“Oh,” Techno’s stomach churned. “I forgot.” He hadn’t. He picked up his fork and cut off a small bite.

He couldn’t look at it. He couldn’t. If Techno saw the food, he’d chicken out. Instead, after a quick hesitation, he shoved it into his mouth.

Ash.

It was tasteless ash. The pasta didn’t even feel like pasta. Just a thick weight that stuck to his tongue, dry and inedible. This wasn’t the first time he’s choked something down in front of Wilbur, just to assure him that he was eating, but it took a mountains effort to muster up enough will to even *swallow*.

It felt thick in his throat. Like he ate a piece of chalk and swallowed it whole. Letting it expand in his esophagus and threatening to stick there. To expand and choke him. The weight was uncomfortable.

Techno snagged his glass and gulped down a bit of water. Then noticed Wilbur watching him with an eagle eye. After a moment, the lingering gritty ash on his tongue was gone, Techno held up a thumb. “It’s good.” He replied, and Wilbur beamed at him.

“Eat up then! I made a lot. So you can take the left overs to work.” Wilbur said cheerfully. Techno wasn’t a fool. He knew how stressed and worried Wilbur was about how much he ate, and the lack thereof.

Instead of saying another word, Techno cut a new bite and shoved it into his mouth methodically. If he thought about it for too long he would gag at the thought of eating another piece of food.

It tasted exactly like the first bite.

If he spat it out, it would look like pasta. A simple dish. But in his mouth it was a desert. A piece of coal he bit into, letting the ash coat his mouth and his stomach churned at the weight in it.

Techno managed to eat half before he sat his fork down. Unable to will himself another bite. His stomach cramping up furiously. As if it was angry he *dared* to put something in it, after it had been hungry for so long.

He couldn’t stop from pressing a hand up against his mouth in an effort to keep it in.

“Is everything okay, big man?” Tommy asked, “you’re looking pale, Techno.”

“Fine,” Techno replied, pressing his hand firmly against his lips. He frantically thought for an excuse. “I, uh, need to burp.”

Tommy laughed. “Just do it! Like so, see?” And he let out a large belch. Giggling like a four year old. Wilbur reached over and punched his shoulder. “Ow!”

“Manners, gremlin!” Wilbur teased, “at least say the words.”

“Ex-fucking-cuse me.” Tommy rolled his eyes.

“Great,” Wilbur said, “now you can help me with the dishes, brat.”

“But!” Tommy pouted, “I was going to play a game with Tubbo.”

“You know the rules. Cook doesn’t clean.” Wilbur pointed to himself, “so that means it’s your turn.”

“I can-” Techno tried to stand up but his stomach lurched. He sat back down heavily. His head was starting to pound.

“Tommy,” Wilbur reprimanded, “can you please do the dishes?”

Techno caught Tommy staring at him. “Oh um. Sure, big man. I’ll do those fucking dishes so well all the women will want me.” He stood up and headed into the kitchen like his ass was on fire.

“You alright Techno?”

Techno nodded, and then regretted it. "Headache." Was all he could grunt out.

"I'm sorry. Can I get you some meds?" Wilbur asked, knowing full well that medicine didn't work on Techno. He tried when they were younger but it didn't seem to do anything. Ibuprofen worked just fine on his other brothers but Techno was the odd one out.

"I'll be fine. I should just lay down." Techno muttered, and finally stood up. "Dinner was really good, Wil. Thanks."

"Any day, Techno." Wilbur replied, "just let me know what you want and I'll make it for you."

Techno nodded, and then there was a clatter in the kitchen. The sound of glass shattering and Tommy swearing.

"Uhhh, Wilbur? I hope you didn't like that one ugly mug." Tommy called, and Wilbur groaned.

"I'll check up on you later," Wilbur said, before disappearing into the kitchen. "Tommy what the fuck? You had one job."

Techno took the moment to escape back to his room. Going up the stairs made his stomach twist and for a second he was convinced he would hurl right on the stained carpet. It took a few moments and several deep breaths before he stumbled through his bedroom door and crumbled onto his bed.

It hurt. Everything was aching. A cold sweat broke out on his back. It felt like everything inside of him was twisting up into knots. Like some sort of stew that was being stirred around.

He laid in bed for... hours. The sun turned orange and then blue as it fell. Leaving his room dark. Techno hoped for the sensations to settle with time. But as the clock crept closer to midnight, he realized that it wouldn't be until the fucking food was gone.

Tommy's room was lit with a dull blue light from his game. And Wilbur's room was dark, no doubt he had gone to bed already. Wilbur had a ton of early morning classes to go to. He stumbled down the hallway to the bathroom just above the stairs, closing it and locking it behind him before falling to his knees on the cold linoleum.

Vomiting was never a fun affair. It was easily the worst sensations Techno had felt his body go through. It topped growing a fucking tail when he was thirteen. But god did he feel so much better afterwards. He was still fevered and soaked in sweat, but it lightened the load. The cramps were gone. Leaving only slight tremors in his hands.

Techno pressed his head into his legs, leaning up against the lip of the tub. Breathing in slowly, trying to keep himself from passing out. His hair was sticking to his sweaty neck. A cold shiver running down his spine.

Something touched his shoulder. Nearly making Techno jump out of his skin. He croaked, the noise sudden and devolving into a coughing fit. Shivering violently as a hand patted his back.

It was cool. And almost welcoming. A sudden wild desperate urge to lean into it caught Techno off guard.

“Aw, not feeling well? I can get you some stuff to settle your stomach, mate.” The words made the chill in his bones freeze.

Techno slapped the hand away. “Go away,” he croaked out, his voice hoarse. “Get out.”

Phillip let his arm fall, “I’m just trying to help. I can get you something light for your stomach.”

“I don’t need anything from you.” Techno hissed, the anger momentarily blinding him to his weakness.

“I just want to help, Techno. You’re ill.”

Techno stood up, cursing how his vision went staticky and he swayed. A hand gripped his elbow to stabilize him. Techno found himself leaning into it, and took his moment. The thing he had been wanting to do since Phillip made his way back into the land of the living. He reached up and snagged Phillip’s collar, gripping it tightly and pulling him close.

“I don’t know why you decided to come back, you piece of shit.” Techno spoke in a low, dangerous tone, “I *know* what you are. What you’ve done. I won’t ever regret what I did. And if I ever fucking see you go *near* Tommy and Wilbur, I’m going to do it again. You don’t get to hurt them again. I got rid of those fucking gardening shears.”

Phillip eyed Techno calmly, “I don’t know what you’re talking about, Techno.”

Techno pushed his father against the wall of the bathroom. A furious snarl almost leaving him, but he held the noise back. “Yes you do!” He snapped, “you *do*. You think you can play the idiot by saying you hit your head or whatever shit, but you *know*. You know everything. You think you can get us to lower our guards but jokes on you, we will *never* forgive you.”

His voice was rising in volume, “all the fucked up things you did to us as kids, we won’t forget. You can fucking ask us on your knees to forgive you but we won’t. You’re an abusive shit father who tried and failed to get rid of us. This time,” Techno paused, almost breathless, “we will fucking get rid of you.”

A hand wrapped against Techno’s wrist, pulling it away with little effort. How many times had that same hand come down to hit against his face. Making his vision white out in pain. How many times did it carry a beer bottle. Only to throw it at a son who got too close to be noticed.

It was gentle now. Fingers were not tight as they touched his wrists. Nails were not biting as the dug in. Instead, Phillip stepped away.

“I am sorry, Techno.” Phillip replied, “I’m sorry I invaded your space like this. I’ll leave you alone.” He paused at the doorway, “truth be told, my memory is a bit faulty at times after the accident. Later, when you’re feeling better, could we have a conversation? I’d like to fill in the gaps of my memories.”

The last thing he said before he left made Techno freeze. The words cementing him down. Filling his ears and keeping him still.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Techno was left alone, swaying slightly on his feet. Staring at the wall as his thoughts churned and twisted. The feeling in his stomach returned. Cramping up. Not from food, but from a sudden anxiety that came from a thought. A single impression that hit him as Phillip spoke those words.

Phillip could never shut up about gardening shears. Not since Tommy turned nine and grew in a sudden pair of black wings. It was all he could ever talk about. Every single fucking day was those shears. Their father had never been a gardening sort. Their mother had liked to spend time out in the plants before she left in the middle of the night. But she had left behind her tools. Including a large pair of shears that were meant for cutting branches from trees.

Every single day, Phillip would coldly eye his youngest son, and every day he would mention how he wanted to fucking cut off Tommy’s wings. A few times, even going out to grab them before falling over in a drunken stupor. Wilbur had hidden them once, resulting in their father having the worst explosive screaming tantrum they had ever witnessed. Techno could still feel the aches in his ribs from it. There was still a hole in one of the walls they covered with a painting from a bottle being thrown.

Those shears were his father’s fucking goal. To one day try and turn his son “normal” again. Not that it would. But a drunken fantasy was never logical. He would rant about them. Rave it over and over. They were almost worshiped.

Techno buried them. Under the rosebushes. Amongst the remains of the body. As a final fuck you to the man. When Tommy and Wilbur came home the next day, they never noticed the item, and their father, missing, until two weeks had passed.

There was *no* fucking way that Phillip would ever forget about it. It was impossible. That was the first thing that flashed across Techno’s mind. The second thing made Techno’s body go cold. The sweat coating his back freezing and sticking to his skin. It was a simple logical step. Going from one point to the second.

There was no way that Phillip would forget about the gardening shears.

Because...

That wasn’t Phillip.

[x file theme begins to play]

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

TW: family abandonment and Violence, Gore, and character (not main) death.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Their mom left years ago. When Techno and Wilbur were both in elementary and Tommy was in preschool.

Just packed her backs and left without a word.

Techno didn't know if he could blame her for it. If he had the ability to leave- to give up their shitty house with peeling paint and Phillip who lived inside- he might have done the same. Except, deep down, he knew he wouldn't. He wouldn't do that to Wilbur and Tommy, both so terribly young and fragile.

Their mother never commented on their otherworldly features. But she also never did anything about Phillip. She recoiled when Wilbur's eyes were just a little bit too yellow. Or when Techno's baby teeth fell out and incredibly sharp ones poked through the gums. Tommy didn't have those features. Instead, he got their father's blue eyes. Full of kindness instead of hate. And blonde hair that didn't quite match Phillip's but it was close enough. Genetics weren't perfect.

Tommy was perfect. Human.

Not like Wilbur and Techno.

Wilbur had only a few traits. Inhuman eyes. Sometimes he broke out in a rash that revealed scales beneath his skin.

But Techno? He had it the worst. The second he was born there was something off. He could easily imagine the nurses at the hospital going quiet as they saw him. Small and frail, a little babe, with a mop of pink hair.

The rest of it all came later. The more Techno grew up, the more things appeared out of the ordinary. The teeth. The long shirts that covered his scales. The sharp points in his pupils and the red irises. His parents kept his hair shorn, up until their mother left. A razor came out once there was a hint of pink fuzz.

It was why Techno kept his hair long now. Even when the dye inevitably failed and pink began to show up underneath. He kept boxes and boxes of brown hair dye under the sink. Techno bought it in bulk after there was a deal on hair dye at the store he worked at.

Tommy had been perfect. Even up until their mother left. It wasn't a few years later when he grew ill for three days before two tiny soft wings slipped from his shoulders that he was revealed to be like Wilbur and Techno. Their mother never knew. Never reached out.

The reason why she left was clear.

It was because of Techno.

Wilbur eyes could be hidden by thick lenses, but Techno kept growing monstrous. Once his baby blue eyes turned muddy with red, it wasn't the same. Wilbur's eyes were yellow, but they could be argued away.

But with Techno? There was no hiding what he was.

Techno would have been happy to never know what happened to their mother after she left. And it had been that way. Up until a few years previous when a cop called, half a country away from a city they had never visited, telling them she died in a car crash.

Phillip went to a bar and didn't return for two days. And when he did, he threw himself at the liquor cabinet. Trying to drown himself in alcohol.

Techno left for a few days as well. Hunkering himself in the nearby library. And when it closed, he stayed in the park.

He knew how Phillip would react by seeing him. It would only make their lash out at Wilbur or Tommy. It was better. For Techno to be away. Despite his brothers going through their own mourning. It was best for Techno to not be there.

When Techno tentatively returned, their father was gone. It wasn't the first time he left them for large periods of time. But it was the longest by far. It was later revealed he went to the nearest casino and gambled away every cent he had.

Later, when Phillip was away, a police report made it's way to their home. Phillip had requested it. But he never asked for it when he got home. Techno was the only one who read it. Tucking it away from Wilbur and Tommy. It wouldn't help them. To know how brutalized their mother had become in the car crash.

There were pictures, too.

Techno tried not to think about the cold photos showing the gaping hole in his mother's chest. Her sightless eyes staring up at nothing. Blood slipping from her twisted mouth in pain.

She looked well. Despite her death. She had makeup on. And there was jewelry around her neck.

A new glittering ring around her left fourth finger.

Techno shoved the papers into the darkest corner of a cabinet and tried to forget it all.

Whoever said that ignorance was bliss was onto something. There was something... deep in his bones, Techno was terrified.

It was simple. It was so fucking simple.

It had been there since the beginning. Right? Techno had simply been blind to a glaring obvious trick. Who would look at Phillip and see somebody else?

Honestly, Techno was surprised that he was the first to figure out. What with Tommy's impressive streak with that one online game with the little characters on the spaceship, Techno figured his brother would've been able to spot the "impostor" with ease.

Even the way the New Phillip moved wasn't the same. It was so fucking obvious now, the curtain swept aside to reveal the man behind it, the trick revealed. Other Phillip didn't act like their scumbag father because he wasn't him.

The reason why Other Phillip hadn't drawn Techno to the side and threaten him for his life was because he didn't know. He didn't know that Techno had killed their father. New Phillip didn't treat them like they were shit to be scrapped off of his shoes. He didn't look at them with horror or disgust. Tommy had said he was "kinda nice" so why would they ever look closer than that?

Who would look at the face of their father and think that it was somebody else? Something else.

He didn't threaten them. Didn't smoke the day away. Didn't corner Techno in the hallway demanding for money.

Techno woke up early. Or perhaps he didn't sleep at all. His thoughts churning too fast to make sense. He stepped outside of their shitty house, wearing a long sleeved shirt. He forgot to take his contacts out again last night, and his eyes burned. It wasn't the first time he made that mistake, but Techno could deal with it.

The front of the house was dirty. It had been once a pale yellow, with a nice white picket fence and a few bushes in the front filled with flowers. Time had worn it away. Dust discolored the yellow, and the sun bleached the slats. Their house wasn't in the HOA rules, thankfully. Even though the neighbors gave them a few dirty looks for the state of it.

But their lawn was part of the rules. Twice a week Techno would drag out an old lawn mower and take care of it. Else a letter with a fee attached to it would appear on their front door step. The grass didn't grow so much as wilt, sagging to the side like ooze. Yellow spots marked where the sprinkler didn't catch that section, the rare few times that Wilbur remembered to turn it on before leaving for school.

The rules also stated that flowers have to be in certain spots along the front of their house. Techno had distant memories of his mother pruning the rose bushes. Snipping the flowers and letting the heads fall onto the grass. He would pick one up and offer it to her, and she would tuck it behind one ear, despite the flower's petals were brown and wilting.

She always took it out before Phillip came home.

Even now, as summer hit with hot waves and a drought that seemed to suck all the moisture from the air, the roses bloomed. Vibrantly. Their stems were covered in thorns. And the green leaves were lush and dark.

The lawn, in contrast, was dead. The grass crunched under Techno's feet as he stepped forwards. Silently.

He leaned down and saw the dirt still there. Where he tossed it back over the plants he had uprooted. It hadn't been the neatest of jobs, he had a rather stressful night. Killing his father and finding out that flesh was sweet.

Tommy and Wilbur never knew. Techno made it that way. He cleaned the kitchen up, taking the body out and burying it when the rest of the neighborhood was asleep. He never said a word when Wilbur and Tommy eventually figured out that Phillip was never coming back from his impromptu trip. Or when they filed a missing person report. His lips stayed sealed when the sheriff came by and told them with a heavy heart that their father was declared dead.

He held them when they cried over their deadbeat father. Relationships were never fucking simple. Yes, they hated Phillip. They never shared kind words with each other. But they cried over the bastard. Wilbur and Tommy never took the brunt of damage, Techno shielding them from it all. They didn't know that their father was planning on drugging Tommy and using those fucking shears to-

Techno's throat reflexively swallowed, thinking of what happened after. After Techno found out about his scheme, finding the sleeping pills in Phillip's hands, and the red. Just. Lunging forwards and using those sharp teeth for the first time to sink into skin.

It had been so easy. To just. *Bite*.

He had to swallow again. Hard. Techno's knees pressed into the dead grass, his fingers touching the dirt. There were no disturbances.

If he had to guess, he would say that it was still there. Phillip was still there. The body no doubt decomposing, worms eating away at his flesh until there was only bones. The roses, nearly dead before, were thriving. Their roots must've reached the body now.

Was it confirmation?

Was this all Techno needed to know for certain that the thing in their house playing as Phillip was not their father?

Or did he need to dig.

Maybe he was making it all up, Techno thought almost hysterically. Maybe it had all been a dream. Killing their father, biting down and feeling bones snap between his jaws, digging up the flowers to bury his body in the soft mulch— maybe that was just. A fantasy.

Maybe their father had been hit by some car and was in the hospital and came out a changed man. It was easy to believe it. So fucking easy to just sink into that reality. Look the other way. And pretend he saw the truth instead of a lie.

All it would take to break it was to dig his fingers into the dirt. Pull up the roots. And find what he hid under the soil.

"Oh, is that you Techno?" The words broke him out of his thoughts, and Techno looked up into the sweaty face of one of his neighbors. Punz. He had been a year older than Techno. Punz had spent most of his time in high school trying to pick a fight with Techno when Wilbur wasn't looking. Making fun of Techno's old clothing and hair.

It was easy to say, they were not friends.

"Punz," Techno rasped out, rising to his feet.

"I thought I saw a familiar mop of hair," Punz spoke, his lips tilting up into a familiar smirk. A nasty tilt to his lips, an insult hidden in the words. It was the same sight Techno was used to. "I'm stayin' with my folks while I'm taking a gap year in college. Where did you go to college again? I forgot so easily."

He knew that Techno wasn't in school. Wilbur was. With his high grades, Wilbur got a fantastic scholarship. Techno did not perform well enough to qualify for one.

"Just workin'," Techno replied, even though he shouldn't. He should just turn around and leave. Punz had clearly been on a run, with his loose work out clothes that showed tanned muscles.

"Shame. Where are you working at? McDonalds?" Punz snickered. Leaning onto the no-longer white and fence. Scuffing his shoes against the boards. Techno could hear the paint start to crack. "Heard your old pops rose from the grave."

Techno glanced down. Looking at the dirt at his feet. Punz's pristine white running shoes mere yards away. And shrugged.

Punz continued, "it's been the talk of the neighborhood. We are having a big party on Thursday. You know, grills, burgers, kids screaming as they run around the pool. You coming?"

"Can't." Techno replied dryly.

"What about your family? Wilbur is totally invited. Tell him to bring his guitar. He can at least hang out with us, right? Tommy too. Kid's a hoot to be around." Punz didn't look too bummed out over Techno's attendance.

Techno opened his mouth to decline- they never enjoyed going to these things- when a hand clamped down on his shoulder.

"Oh, we would love to come." Phillip was next to him. Or the thing that wore Phillip's face. Techno hadn't heard him approach. The dry grass hadn't made a noise.

"Ah, Phillip, right? I heard you were back in town?" Punz rubbed a shoe up and down the back of his leg, "how was your vacation?"

"Terrible," Philip replied easily, and the hand that still touched Techno squeezed, "I was away from my family for too long."

A cold sweat broke out on Techno's back. His eyes dropped down to the yellowing grass. And the roses in full bloom in front of him. They were thriving, dozens of flowers blossoming a vibrant rich red color. Their leaves an dark healthy green, thorns hidden behind each leaf.

"Oh, well-" Punz' voice was almost distant. Even though the obnoxious man was right in front of Techno. No, there was something else that drew Techno's attention.

The hand on Techno's shoulder was hot. Really hot. The sun hadn't quite heated up the air, but Techno could feel weight of it. As if it was burning through his ratty old shirt and into his skin. It didn't squeeze. Nor did it move. It simply rested there. But the weight of it pressed into his bones and flesh. Making his blood run hotter.

It felt wrong.

"Oh, we would love to come." Phillip replied, voice as warm as his palm. Techno couldn't bear to look at him. The imposter wearing a face that didn't belong in this world anymore. If Techno looked at him, Phillip might know that the gig was up. "I'd love to bring my boys and socialize."

"Yeah, Wilbur was in my class during high school. I'd love to catch up with him." Punz smiled.

"Oh did you and Techno know each other too?" Imposter Phillip asked.

Punz paused to think, but it was an act. Punz had bullied Techno. Both of them knew it. Punz had given Techno a hard time. Knocking his books out of his arms. Or grabbing his drinks and throwing them down the stairs. Countless insults. Things that Techno never paid attention, which in turn infuriated Punz. "I think so? Maybe when I was a senior, but I don't think we've ever really talked."

It was only due to how painfully aware Techno was of the Imposter that he sensed the moment when Phillip's smile turned slightly pinched.

The hand on Techno's shoulder moved. Imposter Phillip let out a small hum, that fake smile pasted onto his face. Techno stared down at the grave at his feet. His heart racing and picking up faster speed as the palm traveled up to cup the back of his neck. It stayed there.

Techno mouth grew dry.

Wrong wrong wrong. Something- the fingers? Too long. The flesh wasn't human. It didn't feel *right*. It was fake.

Techno swallowed the sensation down, pushing it to the side even though the hairs on his arms raised up. It didn't slide down his throat like flesh. It choked him, threatening to come back up. To force him come to terms with the revulsion.

"I'm sure Wilbur will be happy to catch up. I don't know if he is free or not, but my boys would still love to come." Phillip replied, his words slightly sharper, but still warm. Techno had to repress a flinch.

"Awesome," Punz gave a quick polite smile to Phillip, his white pristine shoes tapping at the pavement impatiently. "See you in a couple of days. Techno." He nodded and jogged off. Techno watched Punz' shoes disappear from sight.

There was a lull, tense silence. "Do you like to garden, Techno?" Imposter Phillip asked. The hand on his neck squeezed, the first time it did anything besides resting. Then it slipped off. Techno was absolutely certain that there was a burn mark left behind. The heat still remaining.

For one bewildering moment, Techno impulsively wanted to turn to the Imposter and snap. Sink his teeth into the flesh of Phillip's neck. Dig in and feast. Get rid of the threat. Who cared if they were on their lawn, in full sight of their neighbors?

It scared him. More than Phillip did. And Techno bit the inside of his cheek, blood blossoming over his tongue like the roses next to him. He spun on his heel and fled. Like he did when he was a little boy. Running away.

He didn't remember crossing the lawn. But he knew he locked the door behind him, out of habit and out of terror. Techno scrambled up the stairs and into his room. Closing it and pressing his back against the shitty fake wood door. Running his fingers through his hair. Before sliding down with a breathless wheeze.

Downstairs, his ears picked up the sounds of footsteps and cupboards being open and shut. Phillip's grating voice mixed with Wilbur's laughter.

Techno locked the door. It hadn't stopped the imposter from walking back in. He was certain he did it. He remembered feeling the lock slide in place, the weight of the click between his fingers. The deadbolt sliding into place.

Unless he was really losing his mind. Techno fingers tightened in his hair, pulling at it. Breathing became harder. What if he was making this all up? Wilbur and Tommy didn't seem to notice anything wrong. They acted like it was all natural. Was it just his own mind finally breaking? Making up things that didn't exist?

Abusive fathers didn't come back from the grave. But... halfbreed sons didn't exist in the normal world. Techno was living proof of something else in the world. He was an abomination. Tommy and Wilbur were both unnatural, but Techno was the real monster.

Phillip's existence made Techno question everything. Had he really killed his father? Maybe he had dreamed it up. A wild hallucination to explain why their father had gone missing. Maybe he had been overworking himself? Too many late night shifts in a row? Maybe

Techno has been losing his grip on reality far longer than expected and it was all crumbling down.

Techno's breathing grew harsh and he could barely. His fingers pulling on his hair. The pain helping his spiraling. His head was getting dizzy and he raised it to try and gulp down more air. His fingers sliding through the strands and leaving something in his palm.

A dark red rose petal.

His stomach rose and dropped at the same time. Proof.

Techno wasn't crazy. He wasn't. Otherwise the roses wouldn't be so vibrant. They would be dying like the rest of their yard.

He wasn't imagining it all. It was all real. His fingers curled around the petal and crushed it into his palm. Staining his skin red. Again.

The confirmation wasn't comforting in the slightest.

There was a terrible noise. Not like thunder, all boom and crash, dramatic and loud.

It was a crunch. Metal twisted and slid, bending into odd shapes, plastic snapping, an engine guttering one last breath. The motion of a fast moving car suddenly coming to a very deadly stop.

It was almost soft. Had anybody been near by to listen, the noise would have haunted their dreams. It was not loud. No screeching tires or the crash of glass accompanied it.

It was simply.

Final.

But there was nobody near the rarely used road in the middle of the night out in woods. And the only person who heard the sound was the driver of the car.

Long blonde hair fell like waves against the car seat as the airbag slowly hissed out. A bloody nose dripping down her face. Her eyes, honey sweet and brown like a doe, blinked.

Confused. Her shaking hands came up and touched her bloody nose, and she was staring out of the cracked window as if she couldn't quite believe what was happened.

The car suddenly dipped as a weight was dropped onto it. And the front window exploded into shards.

The woman let out a scream, hands coming up to protect herself. It did nothing, of course. More blood started to trickle down her arms, seeping onto her expensive bracelets.

When she looked up, a monster was staring at her. She screamed again, this time pulling fruitlessly on her seatbelt. It wouldn't click open, and she began to claw at it.

“Shhh,” the *thing* crooned, leaning into the car. Shadows seemed to curl and weave into shapes, climbing over the interior until she was surrounded. The woman breaths began to come out quick and fast, her eyes wide and wild like the animal she was.

“Don’t worry, mate” it spoke, maw full of sharp teeth that twisted up into a grin. “Just here to take back something I loaned.”

The woman choked, her lungs seizing up, as a clawed hand slipped smoothly between her ribs. She let out a gasp, ever so prettily, before going very still. Eyes wide, tears sliding down her cheeks, as the monster wrapped it’s fingers around her heart and twisted. Like it was plucking fruit from a stem.

Blood dripped from the monsters arm as it pulled back, the still frantic beating muscle in it’s palm. The heart twitched and shuddered before slowly it’s motions grew faint. The woman’s mouth was open, gasping short sharp breaths. As if her pitiful lungs could force her heart to continue pumping her blood. Blood beaded at the corner of her mouth.

The monster held her heart up, it’s eyes narrowing. “What,” it spoke, all amusement gone from it’s tone, “*is this?*”

The woman eyelids flickered and she began to sag into the blood soaked car seat.

“Hey, hey,” the monster reached out and grabbed her, shaking her back and forth harshly, “answer me bitch. What did you fucking *do*?”

Within a few seconds, there was nothing but a corpse in the car. The monster slammed the woman’s head against the steering wheel, and let out an inhuman scream. Birds flew into the pitch night sky, spooked by the noise. It’s fist closed around the faintly twitching heart, crushing the delicate muscle until it was fleshy paste.

It leaned into the car, holding the woman’s hair in it’s grasp and pulled her head up at a twisted angle. It shook her, and it felt her neck snap with the force of it. But she was dead, her soul long gone, and it could do nothing but rage.

“When your husband dies,” it hissed, “I will find him. I will take his soul. He won’t feel a moment of peace for the rest of his miserable little existence. I will find everything he loves and make it all burn. I won’t stop until I find my *heart* again.”

Phillip McCraft made a horrible, terrible mistake.

Chapter End Notes

hey im alive.

what with twitter being dead, i made an official tumblr for asks and things for my writing. come hang out. [My Tumblr](#)

Their mom is not Kristin btw :)

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Once More, Techno has a Bad Time. Except this time it's religion flavored. And Tommy. (he cries, lol)

Chapter Notes

TW: religious trauma of the Catholic Variety.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It wasn't like Techno could tell Wilbur and Tommy that the *thing* wasn't Phillip. The only proof that Techno had was six feet under their front lawn. And that would involve *confessing* to his brothers that he killed their father. Techno lied to them. Told them that Phillip had just left for a casino while Techno was still picking flesh out from between his teeth.

Wilbur and Tommy would know what kind of *beast* Techno truly was. He had always tried to hide the truth from them. Tried to hide what he really was.

Having scales and oddly colored hair was one thing. But eating a human being was a whole other ballpark. His brothers had quietly excused Techno of his sins, but this was far too large of a mistake to simply cover up.

They would hate him. Techno couldn't even stomach the idea. Just the thought of it made him shudder.

But the Imposter hadn't done anything wrong. At least, not where Techno could see him. Tommy and Wilbur had yet to complain about anything, except how curious the Thing was. Asking questions constantly. It was annoying, but not anything bad. It made sense.

Techno went to work, his head buzzing with thoughts. He did his job. Mindlessly, the hours slipped past him. And still he had no answer. As time passed, the more stressed he became. And finally he stumbled into their house, shaking from exhaustion and nausea. His stomach twisting itself into circles.

The television was on. It was playing a sport, the announcers rattling off the moves of the players. Tommy booed loudly at the screen. Throwing a handful of popcorn at it.

“Tommy,” Wilbur grumbled, eying the mess of kernels on the carpet, “you know you’re going to have to clean that up.”

“He shouldn’t have made that shitty move,” Tommy replied, throwing his hands at the television. “He’s fucked their team up.”

Techno almost smiled at the familiar scene. But he couldn’t. Sitting between his two brothers was the *Thing*. Not-Phillip. With his limp blonde hair and stained shirt, a faint, crooked smile that seemed almost unnatural for how it sat on their dead father’s face. The Imposter.

Wilbur and Tommy didn’t seem to mind that Phillip was there.

And that was like a knife had sunk into Techno’s back. A piece of his heart cracked. Slightly.

They didn’t know that it wasn’t their father. Instead, they were happily spending time with the shit man that they knew.

(A flash of garden shears in the corner of Techno’s eyes. The blood, not Tommy’s, not his little brothers- no no no it was Phillip’s. The red didn’t dull the eerily bright blades, but instead made them honed. Razor sharp. It could have been Tommy. It could have been his wings buried under the rose bushes. It could have-)

“Oh hey Techno,” Wilbur spoke up, finally noticing Techno standing frozen in the doorway. He sat up. “Would you like for me to heat you up some leftovers-?”

Without a word, because if Techno opened his mouth he knew he would break something, Techno walked away. Up the staircase. Into his bedroom. And closed the door.

He took in a breath. Exhaled shakily. Tried to unclench his jaw but that didn’t work.

It didn’t feel safe in here anymore.

Techno slumped onto his bed. His head pounding. He felt like he would throw up. There was nothing in him to vomit. His dirty shirt still smelled of work. Normally he’d change as soon as he got home but he couldn’t muster the energy.

It wasn’t just physical exhaustion that weighed him down. Techno dug his palms into his eyes. It worked, for a moment.

There was a soft knock at the door. And after a moment, it opened. “Hey Techno,” Wilbur called out softly, as he closed the door behind himself. Muting the excited shouts from downstairs.

“What.” Techno grunted, exhausted.

Wilbur crossed the room and sat down next to Techno on the bed. “I just wanted to check up on you. We haven’t been able to talk for a while. Are you… doing okay?”

The question, so fucking simple, hit Techno like a bullet. It found a horribly vulnerable spot and, without Techno’s permission, his eyes began to sting.

“No,” Techno choked up, surprising himself as his voice cracked, “I’m not okay, Wil.”

Wilbur made a soft noise and opened his arms. A moment later, Techno’s face was pressed up against Wilbur’s chest. The familiar softness of his brother’s sweatshirt pressing up against his nose. Techno made an ugly wet noise- a sob- and he tried to choke them down. But it all came rushing out. Tears and snot made his face hot and wet.

Wilbur ran his hand up and down Techno’s back. Mumbling soft soothing words, things that just didn’t make sense, but it somewhat worked. Until Techno heard a soft, “do you want to talk about it?”

Techno’s fingers twisted into Wilbur’s sweater, and the words were thick on his tongue, “I can’t. *I can’t*.” Then there was the sensation of something snapping near his fingertips. It didn’t take a genius that Techno had just ripped Wilbur’s favorite sweater. Just by touching him.

God, he really was a monster, wasn’t he? He didn’t even have to tell Wilbur about the patricide he committed. He was a walking, breathing, *freak*.

With a near inhuman keen, one that Techno tried, and failed, to swallow down, he tried to let go of Wilbur. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” he babbled, “I’m so-“

Wilbur grabbed him and crushed Techno against his chest. “I don’t care, Techno.” Wilbur replied, “it isn’t the end of the world. I am your big brother. Tell me what I can do to help you. Okay?”

Except... Techno can’t. He couldn’t do anymore more except press his face against Wilbur’s shirt. Feeling hot tears burning his eyes as they fell freely. How long had it been since he had last cried like this? Techno couldn’t recall. Not since he grew up, when he became tall and strong. When Phillip stopped throwing beer bottles and fists at his brothers. A threat that could fight back.

Wilbur hummed a soft song and rubbed Techno’s back. It only made more tears flow freely and the unexpected kindness. Something that Techno had forgotten. He clung to Wilbur, smelling his freshly washed clothes, now damp from his snot.

Eventually, as all things do, the tears stopped. His eyes still burned. But they were no longer leaking. With a red and wet face, Techno sat up. A little bit of him unwilling to leave Wilbur’s arms.

Wilbur, thankfully, kept a hand on Techno’s shoulder. Like he knew that Techno wanted to bury himself in his embrace. It was so warm.

“I know we haven’t said it enough, but...” Wilbur sighed, “thank you, Techno. I know it’s hard. Working to put me through college and Tommy’s sports. Not to mention the rest of the bills. You put the rest of your life on hold for us.”

“It’s no problem,” Techno rasped out. It had been a simple and easy choice. It was hard some days. But Techno had always protected his brothers. Seeing them smile and laugh, stress free,

made it all worth it.

To Techno's surprise, Wilbur yanked him back into a crushing hug. And then Wilbur ruffled Techno's hair obnoxiously. "If you ever need a break, Techno. Please. I want to know. Let me be there for you, just like you are for me. Besides, if there is one good thing about the bastard living with us again, is that he paid for my next semester."

Techno let out a grunt and ran a distracted hand through his hair. "He did?"

"Yeah, cut out a check. I'm surprise it didn't bounce." Wilbur folded his arms. "He isn't... I am not certain what to do around him. To be honest. He hasn't been a complete asshole. And Tommy loves him. Phil is... different."

Techno's jaw clenched, and he let out a tense nod. His stomach sinking.

Because it wasn't Philip. It was something else entirely. Something that made even Techno, a monster that he was, freeze in fear.

For a second, the words were on the tip of his tongue. Techno opened his mouth, taking in a breath, *almost-*

And then Techno feared. He could imagine it. Wilbur's warm and open expression shutting closed. The anger, the hurt, and more importantly- the *hate*. Techno could never tell him. Wilbur would hate him.

Techno closed his mouth with a snap. Wilbur glanced at him with a raised eyebrow, and Techno shrugged.

"You know," Wilbur reached over and gently tugged on Techno's hair. "We have some time to finally redye this. If you'd like."

Techno swallowed down the rest of his worries. "Please," Techno whispered, and Wilbur took his hand.

Techno tried to forget. For a moment or two. Stolen pieces of a life he could never get back. He wanted to spend time with Wilbur, and pretend. That everything was fine and normal and nothing was wrong at all.

But the thoughts came back to him. Haunting him. Creeping in between jokes and conversations.

The real reason why he couldn't tell Wilbur and Tommy was because he was *selfish*. And it didn't bother him as much as it should. He gave and gave and *gave* everything to his brothers. The guilt gnawed at him him up.

He *should* tell them. Techno should warn them. At least. That Phillip wasn't who he said he was. The Imposter could be dangerous. If Techno loved his brothers, he should tell them. To protect them. But... deep in the pit of his heart he didn't want to.

Because telling them would mean losing them. And Tommy and Wilbur was all that Techno had.

Techno couldn't take that final step. Open his mouth and let the words escape. Instead the words burrowed under his skin. Into his beating heart and festered into shame. It feasted on him, keeping him awake at night.

He was being selfish. Horribly, terribly, selfish.

Techno tried to not think about it. (He wasn't successful.)

Techno bent over, placing cans onto a shelf. Adjusting so the bright label was facing outwards. It was mindless work. A relief. While he was on the job, he didn't have to think. Just put the merchandise on the shelf.

A strand of newly dyed brown hair fell into his vision. The smell of the chemicals still lingered, but this was his favorite part. When all of the pink was gone, even for less than a week, before the color began to reemerge. He brushed it to the side, tucking it behind his ear.

A shopping cart slowly wobbled past him, the wheels squeaking from years of abuse, when it stopped. "Techno McCraft?" A voice, curious and mild, spoke up.

Almost immediately, Techno's stomach dropped into a free fall. Even before he turned his head and recognized the man standing at the cart. It had been... eight months? Fuck, Techno was starting to lose track of the exact timing. It hadn't been important, not recently. Although it had nearly been two months since the Imposter-

"Oh, Techno," Dream smiled, warm and gentle, still in his priest garments, "it has been so long. How are you?"

Techno was not a stranger to the Church. It was one of his earliest memories was walking into an old musty building. Old ugly carpet, worn down in the middle of the halls, the smell of mothballs, and metal folding chairs that were icy cold to the touch. There were little hymn books tucked up near the seats, the pages worn and folded.

His father would sit on one of the chairs, leg jiggling up and down nervously, head bent in a facsimile of a prayer. He'd never look at Techno, sitting near him. Mumbling under his breath before the man at the wide open oak doors came. Phillip's eyes were wide and bloodshot from the previous night's drinking.

"McCraft," the Father Prime murmured, hands coming down to rest on Phillip's worn out knuckles, "there is always salvation, even for those who have lost their way."

Phillip licked his lips nervously, glancing down at Techno, and then back at the Priest, "even... even if I gave my soul away?"

“God will always protect what is His,” the Father Prime spoke softly, and Phillip’s shoulder’s began to shake. “You are His beloved son, Phillip McCraft. But the road to salvation is a hard one, especially to those who have fallen. Your soul is safe.”

Techno remembered sitting in the musty Church, and for the first time in his life, discovering he could taste lies.

It was not the first time it happened, nor the last, while sitting in the hallowed halls.

Techno’s eyes fell almost immediately. Dropping to the floor, then to the boxes left unloaded, and then back to the cans in his hands. “Dream,” his voice was hoarse and scratchy. He couldn’t stand to look at the warm green eyes.

“Man, Techno, I haven’t seen you in ages.” Dream leaned onto the shopping cart, the wheels moving slightly. “Honestly, I haven’t seen your whole family. I thought you guys moved out or something.”

“Nope, still here.” Techno mumbled, placing the can onto the shelf and afterwards, noticing his hands were trembling. His fingers curled into fists, trying to hold it back.

“I haven’t seen you in Church,” the words were mild. So fucking normal. But Techno could sense the unsaid accusation.

This was the one person who knew what kind of monster Techno was.

Dream knew *everything*.

After the elderly Priest Prime passed away, his eldest son took over the Church. Dream had been in the same year as Wilbur in high school. He ran in the same circles as Punz. He never instigated, but he had been there all the same. Watching as Punz terrorized Techno with cold, indifferent eyes.

And then Prime died, leaving Dream in charge. Leaving Dream with *notes*. The prayers they tried. The holy water. The baptisms. Of the failed *exorcisms*.

Techno shoved the memories down, down, down. Biting his cheek. Before forcing himself to paste a shitty customer service smile on. “I work Sunday’s now.” He waved a hand around him, at the store, and his fucking job.

“Oh,” he could see Dream smile from the corner of his eye. “You know, Techno, that my doors are always open to you. No matter what day it is. Sunday is a... suggestion. You know?”

Techno hid his grimace and nodded, “thanks.”

“In fact, what is your schedule. We can figure something out...”

Techno opened his mouth, and he didn’t know what to say. “Um, actually, I’m really busy.”

Dream's eyes bore into him. The gentle smile dropped.

The words spilled out of Techno's mouth before he could stop them. His thoughts scrambling for anything as an excuse. "I- um. My father. Is back, you know. In town. And I'm uh- he apparently almost died, you know? Got hit with a car. So I'm- uh spending. Time with him."

"Phillip?" Dream's warmth returned, "oh, I had no idea he was back. I must've missed him at sacrament. What a good son you are, wanting to spend time with an injured family member. I'm proud of you for setting aside your differences with your father."

What a good human, Techno could hear the unspoken words. Learning to forgive. Learning how to push aside the hate.

"I will have to come by and say hi," Dream murmured, his eyes staring Techno down. "Just to see how you two are doing. I am worried for your father's soul, after all."

Techno swallowed and nodded.

Dream reached over and patted Techno on the shoulder. Ignoring the flinch. And then one of his fingers snagged Techno's hair, and pulled it tight. Those bright green eyes studied the strands, and then his lips curled up into a pleased smirk.

"What a good demon," Dream drawled, and then the wheels of the shopping cart squeaked as he walked away.

Leaving Techno frozen on the ground, hands curled up into fists, and the sudden urge to cut all of his hair off.

(Once, and only once, after the death of Phillip did Techno try to go to church. It wasn't because he worshiped God, or had a sense of duty. It was more out of habit. He had always attended the morning sermons, under the watchful eyes of Dream. He'd sit in the confessional booth and hear silky words praising him for his selflessness and within the next breath, his condemnation for what he was.

Techno went only for one reason. It was because he ate a man.

And he was terrified.

He was truly becoming the monster everybody told him about. Techno never felt like he was evil, that he was something other. His personality and mannerisms were the same as everybody else. It was only his body, abnormal and freakish that made him stand apart. And at one point he tried to convince himself it was a bad lot of rare genetics.

Techno took one step on the church grounds, bent over, and threw up. Almost immediately feeling a fever burning at his skin.

Wilbur swiftly delivered him home and put Techno to bed. And Techno didn't try it again. Knowing that he was far, far too late to be saved. Even God, mythical as He was, couldn't save Techno. It had been inevitable.

Techno was always meant to be a monster.)

Techno's shoulders were aching from the long shift and from the anxiety. Dream's short visit had put him in a bad mood. And it was with relief that Techno could go home. He was ready to lay in bed and rest, just for a moment, but when his beat up car turned the corner he saw Wilbur and Tommy out on the porch. As he parked, he could hear Wilbur's raised voice from inside of the car. Tommy hissing out something in response.

His car door squealed as he opened it, and Wilbur barely acknowledged him. "Tommy, you are being unreasonable."

"Me?" Tommy snapped back, his floppy blonde hair falling into his face which he brushed back angrily. "I'm the one being unreasonable? You're the one who's stuck in the past. Why can't you just move forward?"

"There is a time and place for that, yes. But this isn't something that you can just—" Wilbur tried to talk but Tommy whirled around. Completely ignoring Wilbur to face Techno. Tommy pointed an accusing finger at his brother.

"Neither of you will listen to me. The only person who even cares about me is Phil these days. And it fucking sucks to see you mistreat him." Tommy exclaimed, "I'm over it."

Techno sucked in a breath, and slowly exhaled. Brushing the hurt away. He held up his hands, "bruh, I just got home. At least let me take my shoes off before accusing me of things. What even started this?"

Tommy opened his mouth and Wilbur slapped a hand over it. Tommy let out an angry noise and smacked Wilbur's hand off. Wilbur hissed out, "not in the open, Tommy. Get inside if you are going to yell about this. Our neighbors can hear you scream out here. Understood?"

Techno watched as Tommy snapped out a few insults before stomping up to the front door and slamming it behind him. The shitty dollar store wreath shuddered and nearly fell off.

"Fucking *teenagers*." Wilbur grumbled under his breath and followed Tommy. Techno slowly trailed in behind them. Hearing Wilbur's raised voice telling Tommy to calm down, and Tommy very much was not. There were doors being slammed and feet were stomping.

Exhaustion weighed him down, and Techno didn't have the energy to figure out whatever the hell his brothers were up to. He didn't like to raise his voice often. But sometimes, it was the only way to get them to listen to him. Something shattered in the other room. Finally, Techno had enough.

Techno found Wilbur and Tommy in the kitchen and he snarled, "both of you, *shut up*." As soon as he said it, Techno regretted it. His words were English, but the noise was anything but. A harsh inhuman sound. Another reminder.

Thankfully, his two idiot brothers shut up.

Fingers pressed against Techno's temples and he let out a long sigh. "Sorry, I just. I've had a long day at work. And both of you won't tell me what is going on. Please."

Tommy pointed an accusing finger at Wilbur, like he was a toddler tattling on him. "He won't listen to me."

"I am listening but—"

"No you are not!"

"I heard you clearly the first time," Wilbur held up a hand, "Tommy thinks it's a good idea to tell Dad, I mean, Phil, about our... genetic disorder." He gestured to his head, towards his yellowed eyes hidden behind his glasses. "We... we know that he doesn't remember, clearly. Otherwise he'd say something about it. And he hasn't brought it up once or even hinted at it. We figured out it was one of the things he lost when he was hit by that car."

Techno stood there, frozen. It made sense. A logical conclusion. The Imposter didn't know because he wasn't Phillip. But to the others, forgetting about their deformities made sense. But the answer was very simple. Phillip was under the rose bushes and somebody else wore his face. Of course the Imposter didn't know about the secrets they quietly covered up every day.

"He's been so nice." Tommy's eyes dropped to the floor. His arms wrapping around his too large sweater. Hiding the wings underneath it. "He- he loves me. Us. You guys won't give him a chance. But if you can just see him—"

"Tommy, don't you see it?" Wilbur cut in, "he's nice *because* he doesn't remember. The second he finds out he will go back to his asshole version of himself. We know what he's like."

"He isn't bad- not anymore." Tommy bristled with anger. "I want to tell him. I hate it. I hate having to hide myself again. This house was supposed to be safe. I hate baggy clothes. Why can't you just listen. Techno and I can be *free*—"

"Tommy," Techno snapped, and then took in a deep breath. Trying to calm down his own emotions. His thoughts were trying to race but it was just impossible to *think* around people yelling. "Stop being so selfish."

Tommy's face went slack with hurt and hardened. Techno immediately felt guilty. He opened his mouth to apologize, but Tommy was faster.

"I'm not being selfish! Of course you'd take *Wilbur's* side. Neither of you care about me. No, the only person who even spends time with me anymore is Phil. And he's an asshole, but at least he's trying to make up for it."

"Tommy," Techno tried to say something but Tommy cut him off.

"It's true!" Tommy pointed at Techno, "Phil makes us dinner. Phil is there for my games and doesn't leave in the middle of it. Phil drives me to school in the mornings and picks me up.

He doesn't hide away in his room because he's," Tommy rolls his eyes, "'tired.' He helps me with my homework. Because guess what, newsflash assholes, I'm failing math. And neither of you care enough to ask me about school. Phil is always there for me, okay? So fucking *sue me* for wanting to share something personal. Wilbur is trying to finish his degree and he's taking way too many credits and Techno is working and gets to sit on his ass all day at his job-"

"Tommy-“ Wilbur snaps but Tommy ignores him.

"You don't get to '*Tommy*' me, Wilbur. I know you went to a party last weekend and got fucking drunk. Phil found you stumbling around in the kitchen. I wasn't the one who left you the glass of water and some medicine. Dick face."

Wilbur's face twisted up, but he didn't say another word.

Tommy continued, "Phil does everything around here. He cleans and cooks and takes care of the house. And neither of you don't even thank him for what he does around here. Techno doesn't even need to work anymore. Phil pays for all of the bills. The house loans, the groceries, the utility bill that was *three months behind*. He didn't tell either of you because he didn't want you to feel obligated to him. Techno, you *know* that money isn't an issue anymore. You just want to keep fucking off and leaving Wilbur and I alone. Leaving us all the damn time. I wouldn't be surprised if you were at a casino."

That. Was a low blow.

Techno's jaw was clenched so tight he could feel his teeth aching. He was the adult here. He knew better. But it was also a kick in the teeth to let the insults pass by without acting on it.

He wanted to break something. Very, very, badly.

Techno wasn't sure how he was going to respond. He opened his mouth, unknown words on the tip of his tongue. But the moment broke when the garage door opened. The door seal scrapped against the floor, the sharp noise almost jolting Techno out of his thoughts. There was a rustle of plastic bags, and Phillip walked in. The Imposter stopped at the door when he saw the three of them, his hands covered by the many full bags.

"Oh, welcome home Techno." Imposter Phillip smiled, and Techno could see it how the expression didn't fit his face. A smile never looked right on Phillip's mouth. The wrinkles there were meant for scowls and frowns. Nothing so pleasant as gentle smile. "I didn't expect you home this early. I can reheat-"

"No." Techno bit out. Then paused when he saw Tommy's nose wrinkle and added a mumbled, "thank you," as an afterthought.

"Oh, well." The Imposter held up the bags. They rustled in the silence. "I got some of that cheese that you really like, Wilbur. For your sandwiches." He smiled awkwardly.

There was a beat. And Wilbur mumbled a reluctant thanks under his breath, his eyes firmly on the ground.

“This is what I was talking about.” Tommy pointed both at Techno and Wilbur. “Both of you are acting like assholes.” Techno rubbed the back of his neck. A eerie sensation like he had just been caught with his hand in the proverbial cookie jar.

“Tommy,” Imposter Phillip sighed, “it’s fine.” He set the bags on the empty counter. There was a shit load of food. Something twisted in Techno’s stomach. It must’ve cost easily a hundred dollars or more. With inflation these days, Techno couldn’t bring that amount of groceries home. He eyed the labels. They weren’t even the cheaper knock off things. Full name brands. Foods that Techno would have deemed frivolous. Chips and ice cream and fancy breads.

Not that he could eat them anymore. Techno’s gut twisted.

“No it isn’t,” Tommy protested loudly. “Why can’t anybody see how fucked up this whole thing is?”

How can one explain to another the countless years of abuse? Techno, for all of his love of poetry, didn’t think there was enough words that could ever encompass what he and Wilbur went through. They shielded Tommy. Sacrificing their teen years to let Tommy have a small chance of a normal childhood.

Wilbur suddenly looked far older. A pained look in his eyes. “Listen, Tommy. It’s... difficult. Okay? Its not something that can be done in one day.”

Tommy rolled his eyes, and opened his mouth to say something insensitive. But the Imposter spoke up, “Tommy, this is something between me and your brothers. You can’t make this decision for them. I am grateful that they have allowed me to stay here. That I have the opportunity to try and fix things. To prove to them that I am a different man.”

He didn’t have to prove that he was a different man to Techno. The Imposter was looking at Tommy, allowing Techno a moment to study him.

Visually, he and Phillip could have been identical. The same slightly too greasy dark blonde hair. The wrinkles around his eyes. The pinched look that always appeared on his resting face. He wore the same clothes. Wrinkled and the occasional stain on his shirt. He was disheveled in all the right places.

But it was his manners. The way that he moved. God, how did Techno not see it earlier? It felt too obvious now. The Imposter held his back straight. He removed items out of the grocery bags with grace. And as he stepped across the room to put the jars away, it was smooth and quiet.

“-I wanted to tell you something.” Tommy’s voice cut through Techno’s observations. His brother’s anger suddenly slipped into something a bit more nervous.

“Tommy.” Wilbur groaned, running a hand through his hair. “Don’t-“

“*You promised.* You gave me a promise Wilbur.” Tommy shocked them all, including himself, as he began to choke up. “You said I didn’t have to hide anymore while we were in

our house. But when Phil came back you said I had to cover up again.”

“Oh Tommy,” Imposter seemed to melt, reaching out to put a gentle palm on Tommy’s shoulder. “I’m so sorry. I can leave—“

Tommy rubbed harshly at his eyes. Trying to hide how watery they were getting. “No. No, I want you to stay. You’re really nice and you *listen*. And I don’t want to be alone.”

Wilbur sighed, half of it was a warning and the other half tired. “Tommy.” Another unheeded plea to stop.

And yet, their stupid little brother continued.

Tommy grabbed Phil’s hand. His voice trembling. “Can you promise that you won’t get mad? That you won’t hate me?”

“Of course, Tommy. Anything. Nothing you will say will ever make me change my mind.” Imposter Phillip softly. “You’re my son. I will always love you.”

Techno felt frozen. He couldn’t move. Couldn’t *breathe*.

It reminded him of when newly made Priest Dream had cornered him. Whispering all of Techno’s deepest secrets out into the air. Green eyes watching him, picking apart every shuddered breath and shiver. Watching how tiny Techno felt. Crumbling to the ground, picking him into pieces, looking underneath the thin veil that Techno tried to hide under.

Long sleeves and shitty brown hair dye. Colored contacts that burned by the end of the day. Wear more and more and more until there was nothing underneath that can be seen. Sharp teeth he tried to hide. Scales under his clothes dotted his skin. The hunger for... *flesh*.

Every piece of disguise felt like a bit of armor. Covering him. Protecting him from the stares and whispers. The hate. And now it was all going to be ripped away from him. And all Techno could do was watch.

Tommy bit his lip, looking up at the Imposter with pleading wet eyes. “Even... even if I have wings?”

No.

Techno’s heart was ramming against his ribcage. Beating against the bone. Trying to throw itself out of his chest and splatter on the ground. Wet and gushing blood on the pristine tiled floor. It too, wanted to run away. To escape. Techno could feel the ache of bent knees pressed into hard ground, hours weighing down on his shoulders, begging for forgiveness for something he’s never done.

Imposter Phillip blinked, his mouth opening a little bit. Tommy scrubbed at his face again and then struggled to pull the baggy sweater over his head. But Techno eyes were trained on the Imposter. From the corner of his vision, he saw Wilbur’s head was in hands.

Phillip's blue eyes were dull. A dark blue that were dim. But Techno could see what the others couldn't. The mask slipping away. Genuine surprise flashing, dawning realization, and the pupils contracted into thin slits. Soaking in the sight of Tommy's wings. Black fluffy down covered the awkwardly small limbs that protruded from Tommy's shoulders.

The monster that wore Phillip's face blinked, and his eyes were blue. Not- not the dark blue. But a rich depth of the ocean. Deep. And unknown. It was such a subtle difference, and it made his gut squirm uncomfortably. (*Predator.*)

The Imposter gazed at Tommy like he was the mythical *salvation* that the church preached about. Mouth slightly ajar in shock. A hand, trembling, reached up. And gently touched the edge of a downy feather. Brushing it. Tommy flinched away.

“*Oh,*” Imposter shakily breathed out. “You’re *beautiful.*”

Tommy’s arms crossed over his chest, nervous. “You… you don’t hate them?”

The Imposter let out a faint lightheaded laugh, “how could I hate perfection? Oh, *Tommy.* Look at you.” He reached up, but he didn’t move far. Tommy let out a soft hiccup and practically fell into the Imposter’s arms. Embracing the creature that wore their father’s face.

“Can I… may I touch?” Imposter asked, eyes trained on Tommy’s wings. Hands already outstretched. Barely hesitating as they lingered over the limbs. Tommy nodded into his chest, and Phillip’s hands were *there*. Fingers softly curling through the down. Brushing through the softness.

Techno knew the little feathers felt impossibly silky and fuzzy. He had combed through them several times as Tommy squirmed on his bed. When things got impossibly hard for Tommy to focus, it usually meant the feathers were an utter mess. They had a soft brush upstairs they would drag through the down with, until Tommy fell asleep on their laps.

Tommy twitched at the sensitive feeling, but he kept his head pressed against the Imposter’s chest. Techno couldn’t tell if it was Tommy or the creature who was trembling. The Imposter’s gaze hadn’t looked up once since Tommy pulled his sweater off. Disbelief coloring his features. And then he softly muttered, “you are my son.” And then he repeated, louder, “you are my *son.*” The Imposter looped an arm around Tommy’s waist. Holding him tight.

Tommy’s knuckles turned white as he clenched the Imposter’s shirt. “I’m sorry. We- when it was obvious that you didn’t remember it, we didn’t want to bring it up. You really don’t hate it?” Hate me? The unasked question hung in the air.

“No, Tommy. Hells below, I could *never* hate you.” Imposter’s grip on Tommy grew tighter. Reaching up with one hand and brushed a thumb against Tommy’s cheek. “This is wonderful, Tommy. You’re a miracle.” He seemed to be at a loss for words. Finally he spoke, “I love you.”

“I love you too, Dad.” Tommy choked back, full of emotion.

And they embraced. And it was all happy and full of good feelings. Nothing could ever go wrong. After a few moments, Tommy started to giggle. He pulled away from the Imposter, pushing at his chest when he didn't let go. Tommy raised his head to stare at Techno and Wilbur, his eyes red rimmed but sparkling with joy. "You guys were so worried. See? I *told* you so. Phil wouldn't hate us. You worried over nothing." He sniffed, dragging his arm across his leaky nose.

Wilbur, for once, didn't say a word. Standing next to Techno like a still statue.

The Imposter eyes flicked up to them, finally tearing away from Tommy. "You too-?" He scanned them up and down, trying to pick apart their abnormalities. They stopped on Wilbur's face, or more accurately, his eyes. Glasses only covered up so much. "Oh," breathless once more. Shock mixed with awe.

"You might have been fine sharing your secret, Tommy." Wilbur finally spoke. His voice flat and so, *so* tired. "But it was *our* secret too. So thanks a lot." Wilbur bit out sarcastically. "Come on, Techno." Wilbur grabbed Techno's hand and pulled him out of the room.

Techno could feel the weight of eyes on his shoulders. Pressing down on him. Watching. And he knew, without a hint of doubt, that this would change *everything*.

And he was terrified of it.

Chapter End Notes

usually, when I write a fight scene, I'm clearly on one side of the fight. This one was a struggle because I couldn't choose. Neglected Tommy vs Family Trauma. There was no winner here.

End Notes

Ironically this is not my Halloween fic, but it is still spooky.

My friend, Bitsinboots, author of Secret of Being Colorful and I have made a discord (MULTIFANDOM NOW) server together. It is a 15+ age server. And it's a dictatorship. But if you'd like to come hang out with us, feel free. Here is the [discord link](#).

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!